

**REMARKS**

Claims 6-10 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, the specification is amended to correct typographical errors. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 6-10 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) or §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,287,510 to Xun. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 6 recites, among others, "holding a firing atmosphere temperature in a temperature range of -50 to +10°C with respect to a combustion start temperature of the binder from time when the temperature reaches the combustion start temperature of the binder contained in the porous ceramic structure to be fired to time when the binder is burnt out." Xun does not disclose or suggest the subject matter recited in claim 6.

The Office Action asserts that Xun discloses a heating rate of 2°C per minute after reaching 200°C. The Office Action also appears to assert that, thereafter, during the time when the firing temperature increases between the range of -50°C to +10°C with respect to the 200°C, the binder will be burnt out. As such, the Office Action appears to assert that Xun discloses the "holding" step recited in claim 6.

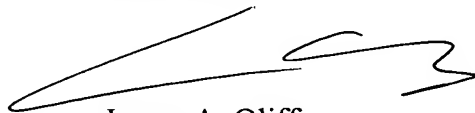
However, one of ordinary skill understands that the burning out of the binder takes approximately 5 hours. See the specification at page 10, line 21. During this 5 hour period, the 2°C per minute heating rate of Xun would result in a 600° increase above the 200°C temperature. This 600° temperature increase is outside the range between -50°C to +10°C. Thus, one of ordinary skill would understand that, in order for the binder to burn out, the firing temperature has to be 600°C above the combustion start temperature of about 200°C, instead of being held within the claimed range of -50°C to +10°C with respect to the combustion start temperature.

In view of the above, Xun does not disclose or suggest "holding a firing atmosphere temperature in a temperature range of -50 to +10°C with respect to a combustion start temperature of the binder from time when the temperature reaches the combustion start temperature of the binder contained in the porous ceramic structure to be fired to time when the binder is burnt out," as recited in claim 6. Thus, Xun does not disclose or suggest the subject matter recited in independent claim 6, and claims 7-10, dependent therefrom. Accordingly, withdrawal claims 6-10 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and §102(b) is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 6-10 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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